

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MILI, AR

SUBJECT: COUP RUMORS

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE LAST WEEK THE BUENOS AIRES PRESS HAS PUBLISHED A SPATE OF STORIES REPORTING COUP RUMORS. BASED LOOSELY AND SOMEWHAT IMAGINATIVELY ON MISINTERPRETED REMARKS BY FORMER PRESIDENT FRONDIZI, AN IMTEMPERATE STATEMENT BY PRESIDENTIAL AIDE JULIAN LICASTRO, AND AN ORDER BY DEFENSE MINISTER ROBLEDO PROHIBITING FORMER PRESIDENT AND EX-ARMY CINC LANUSSE, WHO WAS TOURING MILITARY BASES, FROM LODGING OVERNIGHT, THE STORIES RECEIVED SMALL CURRENCY AND DIED OUT QUICKLY. THE EMBASSY FINDS THE RUMORS TO BE WITHOUT SUBSTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO EUROPE FORMER PRESIDENT FRONDIZI WAS INTERVIEWED BY NEWSMEN IN ITALY. IN DISCUSSING ARGENTINA'S POLITICAL FUTURE FRONDIZI OBSERVED THAT THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE A KEY ROLE. THE REMARK WAS INTERPRETED BY SOME TO INDICATE THAT FRONDIZI BELIEVED THE MILITARY WAS AN ACTIVE POLITICAL FORCE AND THAT HE EXPECTED THE COUNTRY TO REVERT TO MILITARY RULE IN THE POST-PERON PERIOD. FRONDIZI, WHOSE REMARKS DID NOT

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SUPPORT SUCH CONCLUSIONS, NONETHELESS ISSUED A CLARIFICATION

IN WHICH HE STATED THAT HE HAD MERELY WISHED TO STATE THAT THE MILITARY LIKE ALL INSTITUTIONS HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN ARGENTINA. HOWEVER, THIN AS THEY WERE, HIS REMARKS PROVIDED GRIST FOR THE EVER-READY BUENOS AIRES RUMOR MILLS.

3. THE MOST TANGIBLE IMPETUS FOR COUP STORIES WAS A SPEECH BY POLITICAL SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT, JULIAN LICASTRO, WHEREIN HE BLASTED FORMER PRESIDENT LANUSSE AND TWO MILITARY MEN PROMINENT IN LANUSSE'S GOVERNMENT, SANCHEZ DE BUSTAMANTE AND LOPEZ AUFRANC, AS BEING "GOLPISTAS." THE FIRST RESULT OF LICASTRO'S BLAST WAS AN ORDER ISSUED BY DEFENSE MINISTER ROBLEDO PROHIBITING LANUSSE, WHO WAS TOURING MILITARY BASES IN THE INTERIOR, FROM LODGING OVER NIGHT ON POST. DESPITE ROBLEDO'S COMMENT THAT HE HAD TAKEN THIS ACTION TO PREVENT RUMORS OF MILITARY-GOVERNMENT FRICTION FROM BEING GIVEN SUBSTANCE, HIS ACTION WAS SEEN BY SOME AS GIVING SUBSTANCE TO, RATHER THAN MUTING, LICASTRO'S CHARGE.

4. THAT ROBLEDO MEANT TO COOL COUP RUMORS BY HIS ACTIONS BECAME VERY CLEAR ON MAY 16 WHEN LICASTRO, A FORMER ARMY OFFICER, WAS "ORDERED BY PRESIDENT PERON" TO GO TO ARMY CINC ANAYA'S OFFICE AND DECLARE HIS LOYALTY AND ADHERENCE TO THE ARMY HIERARCHY. OBVIOUSLY, THIS AMOUNTED TO A PUBLIC APOLOGY FOR HIS STATEMENT CONCERNING ARMY GOLPISTAS.

5. COMMENT: LICASTRO'S PUBLIC RECONTANTATION WILL PROBABLY END THE CURRENT SPATE OF COUP RUMORS. THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT PROBABLY WILL VIEW THE ENTIRE EVENT AS A PLUS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CAME SO QUICKLY AND DECISIVELY TO ITS SIDE.
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